Aiming for the Top: Rise to Tackle World-Class Challenges

Commemorating the 2024 ICPC Challenge Championship Powered by Huawei

CONTENTS

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Commemorating the 2024 ICPC Challenge Championship Powered by Huawei

It is warm in October in South China, and the air is filled with the sweet fragrance of osmanthus flowers.

It was against this idyllic backdrop that the 2024 ICPC Challenge Championship powered by Huawei was held in Shenzhen and Dongguan, two cities in South China between October 14 and 16, 2024. The Championship was jointly organized by Huawei and the International Collegiate Programming Contest. It brought together top programmers from around the world to explore solutions to real-world industry problems, as well as key technology trends and future challenges.

The International Collegiate Programming Contest, also known as the ICPC, is the "Olympic Games" of computer software.

This year, the ICPC challenge attracted more than 90 coaches and programming contestants from 35 countries and regions across the globe, and many notable leaders from industry and academia participated in the event, including William Bill Poucher, President of the ICPC Foundation; Bourne Stephen Richard, ICPC Director of Ceremonies & ICPC Foundation; Veronika Soboleva, ICPC Foundation Director of Development; Tomas Cerny, ICPC Challenge Director; and Mikhail Mirzayanov, Founder of Codeforces.

Sharing Challenges and Platforms for Tech Breakthroughs and Innovation

On the morning of October 14, the opening ceremony was held at Building F1 of Huawei Bantian Base in Shenzhen. Zhou Hong, the President of Huawei's Institute of Strategic Research, delivered the opening speech. He welcomed the contestants, coaches, and guests to the championship and spoke highly of the huge role that the ICPC Foundation has played in motivating and cultivating outstanding talent.

In his speech, Zhou said, "We have about 100,000 employees engaged in R&D in more than 50 R&D centers all over the world. Last year we invested about US$23 billion in R&D and filed 6,494 patent applications under the PCT[1] and became world No.1 for seven years.

"We will enter an intelligent world within the next 20 to 30 years. This is bringing about unprecedented opportunities, but also creating huge challenges that can only be solved through the joint efforts of bright minds from around the world. Huawei is committed to sharing current real-world challenges and our hypotheses for the future, opening up our platforms, and working alongside

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[1] Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) is an international patent law treaty, concluded in 1970.

Group photo at the opening ceremony

academic and industrial experts and talent, in order to promote major breakthroughs in theoretical research of fundamental science, push the boundaries of application technology, and contribute to a prosperous world."

Bill Poucher also made a brief statement. Sporting a cowboy hat, he took to the podium with a smile, and expressed his heartfelt thanks to Huawei for sponsoring and supporting ICPC challenges for so many years. He also encouraged the contestants to strive for even greater achievements this year.

Huawei Fellow Chen Haibo also discussed Formal Methods for Systems Software: From the Algorithm to Safety and Correctness, a hot topic in basic software with the guests onsite. He explained the definition and significance of formal methods in clear and accessible language and also provided a vivid example of how formal verification could be carried out for software systems.

During the technical salon, Michael Bi Mi, a media algorithm scientist from Huawei HiSilicon, and Li Zijian, an artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm expert from the Huawei Computing Product Line, shared their views on a number of topics such as how to shape an intelligent future and AI vector retrieval to help contestants better understand Huawei's algorithm business. They also announced new problems for the contestants to discuss and explore.

Paying Homage to Heroes Who Help Talent Grow

During the opening ceremony, Huawei presented awards to the winners of previous ICPC challenges powered by Huawei, as well as to outstanding problem authors and teams, problem-solving advisors, and coach representatives. These awards were given to recognize the contributions that they had made to abstracting and developing the problems and supporting problem solving over the past several years.

Bill Poucher, President of the ICPC Foundation, speaking at the opening ceremony

The contestants in the venue with the challenge trophy

Huawei also presented the Outstanding Community Leadership Award to Bill Poucher, Bourne Stephen Richard, and Veronika Soboleva. A galloping horse is engraved on the front of these medals, symbolizing how these leaders have contributed to the development of talent and the global contest community. Guided by lofty ideals, these leaders have remained dedicated to creating a knowledge community that pools global wisdom and resources, aiming to safeguard the development of talent in the field of science and technology.

5-hour ICPC Challenge

On the morning of October 15, flags fluttered under the brilliant sunshine at the entrance of the Huawei Sanyapo Campus library in Dongguan as contestants arrived to the 5-hour ICPC challenge – the highlight of the championship. Inside the library's golden hall, lights shone overhead, casting a warm glow over flowers and balloons. A lively atmosphere could be felt throughout.

At 9:30 a.m., more than 60 contestants entered the hall. They passed through the gateway of champions, took their seats, and started testing their laptops and network connectivity. The trophy for the challenge sat on a pedestal, waiting for the champion to claim it.

At 9:45 a.m., ICPC Challenge Director Tomas Cerny

kicked off the challenge, with the host Zheng Liming then introducing the challenge problem, process, rules, and precautions. Mikhail, the Founder of Codeforces, the online platform that is used to judge ICPC challenge problems, also stepped onto the stage to show support for the contestants.

The challenge focused on the Optimal Photo Story Matching Problem, which was developed by Ju Ran, an expert of Huawei's Consumer Business Group (BG) Software Engineering Department. Ju explained the problem-solving requirements and the business background in plain language that contestants could easily understand.

Ju explained that the problem stemmed from the "Highlights" scenario of the HarmonyOS media kit. AI foundation models are crucial for tackling industry challenges and meeting user expectations for an enhanced experience. A significant challenge currently facing the industry is the real-time generation of a high-quality video clip based on natural language description. This task requires real-time algorithms which place extremely high requirements on smartphone performance, meaning phones have to complete semantic retrieval of tens of thousands of photos in seconds, all while considering factors like temporal coherence, diversity, and other constraints.

According to the rules, each contestant had five hours to solve the problem. They each needed to write a

ICPC contestants working on the problem

program and run it in a preset data use case. The quality of their program code would be evaluated in terms of how well the story template matched the photo stream, the reasonableness of the photo sequence, and other areas. The contestant with the highest total score and who completed the task the fastest would win.

To prepare for the challenge, each of the contestants warmed up in their own unique ways. Some played Tetris, listened to music, or toyed with their split keyboards. Others simply closed their eyes, sat and relaxed, or spoke with staff.

At 10:00 a.m., as the countdown timer on the large screen hit zero, the host's voice rang out, marking the official start of the challenge. The hall fell into a sudden silence, broken only by the occasional rustle of paper and the rhythmic tapping of keyboards.

The contestants focused all their attention on the problem before them. Their fingers danced across keyboards, typing line after line of code. The atmosphere was incredibly intense, and everyone felt their heartbeats quicken.

As the contestants raced against the clock to solve the problem, their coaches and the attending experts closely monitored the real-time rankings on the screen. These quickly changing rankings were a further test of the contestants' ability to stay calm under pressure.

"In the first hour or two, based on the submission

results, you can see that the contestants have come up with a wide range of solutions to the problem. Their rankings and scores are shown on the screen, and the rankings constantly change," Ju commented. "As time passes, the solutions presented by the top-ranking contestants gradually converge to one or two, resulting in smaller changes in the rankings and intensifying the challenge."

At 15:00, the host announced the conclusion of the challenge. After five hours of intense problem-solving, the contestants looked exhausted. They stood up and gathered in twos or threes, excitedly discussing the key points of their solutions. Everyone was looking forward to the closing ceremony the next afternoon, when the challenge results would be disclosed in full.

Igniting More Bright Minds Through Roadshows

On the morning of October 16, another highlight of the championship – the problem-solving roadshow – was held at the Huawei Sanyapo Campus library. More than 10 winners and problem authors from the past three years' challenges participated in the roadshow, sharing ideas for solving problems and communicating with this year's contestants.

ICPC contestants visiting Huawei Xiliubeipo Village (or Xicun) in Dongguan

The roadshow delved into a number of fields, such as Huawei Cloud, the Central Software Institute, wireless, computing, and HiSilicon. The discussions addressed precision improvement, performance enhancement, transmission acceleration, storage optimization, and other key business objectives.

Japanese twins Hirotaka Yoneda and Masataka Yoneda impressed the audience, sharing their various methods and techniques for solving the Accuracy Preserving Summation Algorithm problem from the Computing Product Line. Their presentation and presentation slides both earned high praise from the audience onsite.

After the roadshow, Hirotaka happily stated, "My brother and I have a clear division of labor. My brother is good at writing and design. He has written three books on algorithm and programming contests, which are very popular online. So, he develops the presentation slides, and I deliver the presentation."

This was the second time that Hirotaka and Masataka had participated in the ICPC Challenge powered by Huawei. The two brothers were modest, saying: "We are both seniors majoring in computer science at the University of Tokyo. Participating in the challenge is not only fun – because we love programming and problem solving – but it also gives us the opportunity to meet more experts and top talent and receive their guidance. This is our second visit to Huawei. Huawei is so beautiful that it makes us feel as if we returned to the university campus. We also visited Huawei's product exhibition hall, which really broadened our horizons."

Matheus Aires Freitas Da Silva, a contestant from Brazil, also gave a presentation during the roadshow. In the 2023 ICPC Challenge Championship powered by Huawei, Matheus won the grand prize for his solution to the Buffer Sharing and Pre-allocation for Multi-Tenant Database problem, which was designed by Huawei's Cloud Computing Business Unit (BU). During the roadshow, Matheus explained how he solved that problem and ultimately won the prize. His brilliant presentation received warm applause. In July 2024, he officially joined the Cloud Computing BU at Huawei's Shanghai Research Center.

Matheus enjoyed this roadshow immensely and shared his feelings. "The roadshow is an important part of the challenge," he said. "It gives contestants a chance to communicate with each other and interact with problem authors. I love it and I am greatly inspired by other contestants. Their problem-solving processes and thoughts offer me amazing insights. I will try to apply some of their techniques in my future work."

Also present at the roadshow were three technical experts from Huawei: Wang Kebing from the Kirin Solution's Platform Software Development Department; Zhou Wenli from the Cloud Computing BU's Algorithm Innovation Lab; and Chen Ruo from the Cloud Computing

BU's Database Service Product Department.

Wang Kebing gave a presentation about Parameterized Branch Instruction Stream Generation, which was one of the problems in the 2022 ICPC challenge. When introducing the problem's background and significance, Wang said, "The problem represented one of the most important challenges faced by our business team, so it really appealed to contestants. Problems that reflect real-world business scenarios are more likely to ignite contestants' inner drive and they feel a greater sense of achievement from cracking these problems."

When asked what else can be done to identify and nurture algorithm and software talent, Wang suggested an idea: By participating in timed events that target top talent, like the ICPC challenges, business teams can put forward world-class problems that require more time for thinking. According to Wang, contestants can then go home with these problems and dig deeper into them as part of ongoing study or scientific research projects. "If they come up with an idea or solution, they are always welcome to come back and talk with us. Together, we can find ways to drive scientific and technological progress."

Wang added, "Problem authors from business teams play a crucial role in problem abstraction, translating real-world business pain points into easy-to-understand scientific problems. They need to make sure that contestants with no knowledge of the business domain can easily understand the problem itself, which is vital for future scientific and technological progress. Experts need to delve deep into business pain points in their day-to-day work, and translate these pain points into contest problems using appropriate language. When you get the problem right, you can get twice the result with half the effort."

Zhou Wenli, another presenter at the roadshow, engaged the audience with discussions on the 2022 ICPC contest problem titled Topology-Aware Virtual Machine Placement. He said, "During the 2022 contest, the winner of first prize offered an outstanding solution to the problem. While other contestants sought to convert batch placement into individual placement, he took an unconventional approach, using dynamic planning to generate an effective solution for batch placement. Such a method is worth sharing and learning from."

The roadshow saw lively exchanges between the presenters and the audience, giving everyone a deep and direct feel of the value and significance of the problems.

Even after the roadshow ended, contestants remained eager to explore the problems in more detail, with many reaching out to the business experts they met onsite to discuss their topics of interest.

On the morning of October 16, Zhou Hong and Bill Poucher held in-depth discussions about the future intelligent world with more than 30 ICPC coaches and outstanding constants. These talks centered on future technological trends and how AI-related software and algorithms will help boost efficiency and creativity.

"He Who Conquers Time Wins in ICPC"

The event reached its climax in the afternoon of October 16, when the awards ceremony was held for the challenge winners based on the final ratings on Codeforces.

Hirotaka Yoneda from Japan won first prize. Samvel Andreasyan from Armenia came in second, alongside two other contestants. Six contestants, including Dai Zhiwei from China, were awarded third prize.

Hirotaka had already impressed the audience during his roadshow that morning. When this 23-year-old phenom took the stage and held up his championship medal, the room burst into thunderous applause.

Hirotaka happily discussed his experience with the contests. "During last year's Huawei challenge, I didn't understand the problem correctly and ended up with a low score. I was upset with the result and aspired to win the big prize the following year. I thought I did quite well this time around, but after submitting my code, I still felt unsure. I was afraid that others might surpass me as there was a chance that the ratings would be updated."

When discussing his future plans, Hirotaka calmly said, "This championship is just a milestone. There will be several more contests over the next few months, and I will keep working towards winning."

As he spoke, he raised his wrist to show his Huawei watch. "I like this Huawei watch very much," he said proudly. "It is a prize from a previous contest. It always reminds me to seize the moment. My team has a slogan: 'He who conquers time wins in ICPC'. It has always been a source of inspiration for me."

During the awards ceremony, the Outstanding Problem Author award was presented to Ju Ran, and the Outstanding Problem Development Team award was
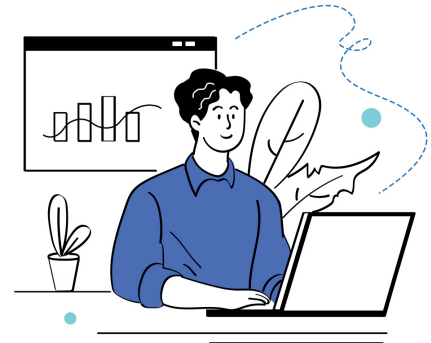
Hirotaka Yoneda (fourth from left) winning first prize

given to Du Dapeng, Yan Yulong, Ju Ran, and Wu Fan, all of whom are from Huawei's Consumer BG Software Engineering Department. Both awards were given to recognize the efforts that these authors had put into problem development.

Ju Ran said, "All of these contestants have exceptional strengths. It is truly incredible that they used multiple novel methods to solve the problem. The entire problem-solving process held nuggets of wisdom. Many contestants also expressed an interest in the Highlights function of our devices. They hope to stay in touch, and work alongside us on problem solving and productization."

Tian Qi, the chief scientist of Huawei's Consumer BG, participated in the closing ceremony and shared his thoughts and practices about AI models. Both contestants and guests responded to his speech with huge applause.

A Gathering of Top Minds – All Aiming for the Top

You raise me up so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be

…

When the song *You Raise Me Up* was sung at the closing ceremony, its melodious notes washed over the hall like a bubbling stream, stirring profound feelings of empowerment. Many contestants hummed along with the tune.

Bill Poucher is a big fan of the song. In his closing remarks, he noted, "It is a classical, motivational song that tries to invoke the same ideas as the ICPC, encouraging people to take up challenges and make breakthroughs. I'd like to thank all contestants and Huawei. Your commitment to finding a way out and rising above challenges is very inspiring for me."

You Jin, human resource director at the Consumer BG Software Engineering Department, also gave his best wishes to the contestants. "Dear contestants, the future lies in your hands," he said. "Please never allow the passion in your hearts to fade. Be bold, be sharp, and be persistent! When you set your sights on the top of the mountain, you must not stop halfway."

The ICPC Challenge Championship powered by Huawei is undoubtedly a flagship tech event and a gathering of top minds. It is a place where contestants can make the most of their capacity to innovate. It is also where Huawei and academia join hands to advance their shared strategic goals: cultivating young talent worldwide, driving technological innovation, and propelling the ICT industry forward.

More ICPC contests will be held in the year ahead, waiting for more bright minds to make a difference. ⦻

From Engineer to Account CFO

By Alberto Ramirez Huaman / Dominican Republic

Find your passion, and you will find your purpose, it is said. This saying resonated deeply with me as I navigated the challenges along the path of my career. Sometimes, your purpose of career comes from your interests or from what others find valuable in you.

The Beginning

It all began in 2010. I started out as a telecommunications and software engineer in my career. Fresh out of university, I found it very exciting to work with a firm in a rapidly evolving industry that was electrifying. I went on to work as a senior software engineer and then as a project leader, a role where I was assigned to various projects.

During this time, I was mentored by very experienced project managers. I admired their confidence, their ability to identify and solve issues, and their overall behavior. One of my supervisors, Mr. Ceballo, stood out. He had special skills for making complex problems seem simple and was always cool and calm under pressure.

One afternoon, after we had successfully completed a challenging project, Mr. Ceballo called me into his office. "You have a natural talent for project management," he said, leaning back in his chair. "Have you considered pursuing a master's degree?"

I hesitated. "I'm not sure if I should go for a technical master's or a management one."

Mr. Ceballo smiled. "Companies are becoming more project-oriented. I think you would thrive in a project management program."

His words planted a seed. I enrolled in a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program specializing in project management. Surprisingly, during my studies, I found the finance and accounting classes particularly engaging. Despite my technical background, the complexity of numbers and the strategic thinking required in finance intrigued me. This set the stage for a significant shift in my career.

A New Direction

While finishing my master's degree in 2014, I was hired as an outsourced project manager (PM) for Huawei. My project director often praised my punctuality and awareness of revenue control. "You have an excellent comprehension of the financial aspects," he noted during a review meeting. "We're looking to recruit a local Project Finance Controllers (PFC). Would you consider applying?"

I hesitated. Switching careers is intimidating, but after much contemplation, I decided to go for it. In 2016, I joined Huawei as a PFC, embarking on a new journey that would redefine my career.

My first assignment was a Level-A breakthrough project. The task was formidable: We had to swap the whole telecommunications network of a customer and we had to build presales and post-sales strategies. I still remember the initial meetings: heated discussions, whiteboards with plans written all over, and my mind quickly filling with details.

One of these meetings is still vivid in my memory. It was a crucial meeting where we were discussing the purchase order (PO) structure. "We need a clear and efficient billing process," Mr. Li, my supervisor, emphasized, pointing to a complex diagram on the whiteboard. "Any ideas?"

I proposed a structure where we would reference the physical sites, delivery units, activities, and PO lines so that we could track each step of the revenue and billing process. "In this way, we can streamline the billing process and ensure accuracy," I explained.

The room went silent; everyone was thinking, brooding. Then, Mr. Li nodded. "Alright, let's try it your way."

Implementing the scheme was challenging, for it involved long hours of work and meticulous planning. We got it done, anyway. The success of the project boosted my confidence. And I helped with this success by formulating and implementing a human resources (HR) savings plan – I would monitor resource roles, regularly checking for budget deterioration, and presenting the results of dynamic resource management to the stakeholders in a timely manner. As a result, we were able to recognize revenue and issue a billing statement one day after the service was finished, which led us to achieve a 90% revenue forecast accuracy and be one of the subsidiaries contributing the highest revenue in 2016.

Expanding Horizons

After a year of forecasting, dynamic resource management exercises and budget authorizations, I realized that the PFC scope was not wide enough for my objectives. I wished for broader responsibilities and more significant challenges.

An opportunity arose when collection management became part of a PFC's responsibilities at Huawei. This expanded role allowed me to dive deeper into billing and

With my region supervisor in the office (author is on the left)

collection processes, fostering close interactions with key account teams and customer Chief Financial Officers (CFO) and Vice Presidents (VP).

Later, my PFC leader assigned me to the Bahamas, where customer B was launching its telecommunications business. The vibrant island setting had a marked contrast to my usual office environment. Here, I learned about financing solutions for new network deployments, from interest payments to installment plans.

During these projects, I carried out various new tasks such as interest expense calculations and installment plan elaboration to ensure that payments and invoices were acceptable to the customer and straightforward payments could be made. This effort fostered great cooperation and trust with the customer in the factoring process. Interest expenses were calculated accurately and on time, solidifying our relationship and demonstrating our commitment to excellence.

These experiences deepened my understanding of business strategies, pain points, and the competition, making me more adept at crafting effective financial solutions.

Growing Further

My goals did not stop there. I wanted to work for some challenging tasks. So, one day, I approached my CFO, requesting inclusion in presales tasks. "I want to broaden my scope and contribute more," I stated confidently.

He agreed, and I began to immerse myself in presales work (office budget planning, contract reviews, estimations, and financial statement analysis), gaining invaluable insights from the legal, finance and credit teams. This involvement enhanced my knowledge of sales opportunities and consolidated my skills.

During these three years, I took learning as a top priority. I would take courses in tax, accounting, and regulatory compliance during my free time. Mastering these areas was essential for my growth.

By 2020, I was appointed Account CFO for the Multi-country Representative Office. This role was the culmination of my hard work and dedication.

Embracing Challenges

Mine is a demanding role, but it allows me to gain great satisfaction from being a key provider of support for the Representative Office and customers and this gratification keeps me motivated. I thrive on the challenges and opportunities where I get to apply the diverse skills I have developed.

One notable challenge that I faced as Account CFO came about when a customer of ours undertook an acquisition – they had acquired another telecommunications operator. They needed my assistance in financially managing the projects of the newly acquired company and addressing the overdue payments that had arisen since the acquisition.

This situation was unprecedented for me, involving both mergers and acquisitions as well as the simultaneous addressing of overdue debts. I had to expand my responsibilities significantly as a result. First, I redefined the contract terms to reflect the new business structure and ensure clarity in our financial agreements. Next, I developed a comprehensive financing solution that involved coordinating with local and foreign banks to provide the customer with suitable financial arrangements.

Additionally, I implemented a multi-country financial project performance monitoring system to keep track of the operator's financial health and project milestones across different countries. This system allowed us to categorize the debt into specific milestones and explore various alternatives to mitigate potential losses.

With colleagues from around the world (author is third from right)

" *As a final experience and an essential part of anyone's growth journey, I want to highlight the enriching experience from knowledge transfer, especially to new employees assigned to me as mentees.* "

For six exhausting months, I led this intricate project, balancing numerous responsibilities and coordinating with multiple stakeholders. The effort paid off as we recovered 100% of the overdue payments. This experience highlighted the importance of adaptability and strategic planning in managing complex financial challenges.

Reflections on Leadership and Growth

Being in a leadership position has taught me invaluable lessons about resilience, empathy, and strategic thinking. Each decision carries weight, and every action impacts not just the company but also our customers and partners.

The dynamic nature of the telecommunications industry means that there is always something new to learn. I have made it a point to stay updated on industry trends, technological advancements, and financial innovations.

Attending industry conferences, participating in workshops, and networking with peers are integral to my growth. These activities provide fresh perspectives and inspire innovative solutions to complex problems.

Balancing a demanding career with personal life is challenging, but essential. I have found solace in hobbies like reading, hiking, and spending time with family. These activities provide necessary relief, allowing me to recharge and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

My family has been a pillar of support throughout my journey. Their encouragement and understanding have been instrumental in my success. My parents, in particular, remind me of the importance of perseverance and joy in everyday moments.

Mentoring and Developing Talent

As a final experience and an essential part of anyone's growth journey, I want to highlight the enriching experience from knowledge transfer, especially to new employees assigned to me as mentees. This included guiding Laura and James. Mentoring them was incredibly rewarding and crucial for my professional development, emphasizing the importance of knowledge transfer in anyone's career progression.

When I first met Laura and James, two financial analysts, I saw a spark of potential waiting to be ignited. Their enthusiasm reminded me of my own early days, and I was determined to guide them on their journey.

Laura was analytical and detail-oriented, excelling in data analysis but initially hesitant in presenting her findings. James, on the other hand, was a natural communicator with a knack for seeing the bigger picture but needed to strengthen his quantitative skills. Recognizing their complementary strengths and weaknesses, I tried to mentor them together, hoping that I could make an efficient mentoring without taking so much

time as they were in different countries.

Our first few months were focused on building their project financial knowledge. We scheduled weekly sessions where I walked them through the business and complex financial models, explaining not just the how but the why behind each step. I also encouraged them to ask questions and challenge assumptions, fostering a culture of curiosity and critical thinking.

Laura's confidence grew as she became more adept at interpreting data and presenting her insights. I encouraged her to take the lead in team meetings, providing constructive feedback to hone her public speaking skills. She soon became known for her clear, concise presentations and her ability to dive deep into data to uncover hidden trends.

James, meanwhile, flourished in his ability to connect different financial concepts and present strategic insights. I worked with him on improving his quantitative skills, guiding him through advanced spreadsheet functions and financial modeling techniques. His presentations became more data-driven, and he started developing innovative financial strategies that helped the local teams.

Through this mentorship journey, Laura and James transformed into confident and skilled financial analysts. As a result both of them went working in roles like account CFOs.

Looking to the Future

My journey at Huawei has taught me the importance of continuous learning and seizing of opportunities. Whether it was in dealing with complex financial structures, negotiating with customers, or optimizing operations, each experience has been a stepping stone to my growth.

As I look to the future, I am excited about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The telecommunications industry is evolving rapidly, and Huawei is at the forefront of this transformation. As a member of this business organization I will do my best to contribute to its growth and success by leveraging my skills and experience to drive innovation and excellence.

Reflecting on my journey, I realize that finding your passion and purpose is a dynamic process. It involves embracing change, seizing opportunities, and continually learning. At Huawei, I have found a place where I can grow, contribute, and make a difference. And for that, I am truly grateful.

Every day at Huawei brings me new challenges and opportunities, and I am excited to see where this journey takes me. Down the road I will remain committed to continuing my growth, supporting my team, and driving success for our customers and company. ✐

Author (second from right at back row) with Laura (third from right at front row), James (second from right at front row) and other PFC teammates

Embracing Change with a Winning Attitude Leads to Growth

By Djivinga Mwendapole / Zambia

I remember the day when I heard of the job openings at Huawei from my supervisor. I was working for a subcontractor at the time on a Huawei managed services project. In 2022 August, there were multiple positions that opened up at the information and communications technology (ICT) giant.

I had been working as a radio frequency (RF) engineer for the previous 15 months with the network performance management (NPM) team, planning and optimizing customer sites as part of my routine work. Long story short, I attended multiple interviews and after consulting my supervisors, I made a change in my career's direction.

Uncharted Territory

On December 19, 2022 I signed on as a product manager and my Huawei journey officially began. When I logged in to my account of iLearning, Huawei's in-house learning platform, I found the material to be so overwhelming. I was at a loss, but there came my mentor, who was very helpful. He made a plan for my probation, including matters ranging from learning to delivery practice. Under his guidance I was starting to find the courses available at iLearning to be very interesting. Thinking back on this, I now realize that not a lot of companies will educate you on the background of their

core values, nor will they teach cross-cultural adaption.

To assess my understanding and capability, my supervisor gave me a High Level Design (HLD) document of some solutions that were to be presented to a customer, and asked me to design the solution on the Configure,

> *After my probation, it did not take long for my supervisor to assign me to my first real-life project as a product manager. I felt like I hit the ground running, to say the least.*

Price and Quote (CPQ) platform. After I had completed the task, he asked me to present my configuration result to the solution team explaining each license and each piece of equipment and defending my logic for each allocated quantity in my solution. This presentation resulted in gaining my supervisor's and my colleagues' confidence. I showed that I fully understood the solution and, more importantly, the requirements of the customer.

Soon I joined a wireless team for a controller reconstruction project. We spent a week doing hardware expansions on the controllers at the data center. After that, the global service center (GSC) team remotely ran the configurations to migrate services and rehome sites. Then came a new assignment for me. I found myself on the Network Performance Management (NPM) team; I had to work to ensure that there were no major degradations on the network caused by any operation. By the way, such work could only be carried out after midnight and the operation could only be executed one base station controller (BSC) at a time in order to manage the risk. This meant that we had to keep checking the key performance indicators (KPIs) through the night after the operation. Thankfully, we took turns and I did only a one-night shift. The operation was a success, as indicated by the KPIs I shared.

Then came the time for me to summarize and present my accomplishments during the probation period. Actually, I demonstrated to the probation assessment team my technical and product understanding. After asking me

some tough, scenario-based questions, the team came to a conclusion in my favor. Now, believe or not, I found myself under a different kind of pressure, because I had to prove that I deserved it – the confidence that the probation assessors had in me.

The Real Deal

After my probation, it did not take long for my supervisor to assign me to my first real-life project as a product manager. I felt like I hit the ground running, to say the least. The customer wanted to modernize and upgrade many of their sites. So far, the only thing they had agreed on was the site list. My assignment was to pick it up from there and to see it through to conclusion.

As required by the customer for the project, we needed to complete multiple mid-band modernizations and an upgrade that would result in the redeployment of the legacy equipment as well as new 5G site expansions. "This has a lot more variables compared with the exercise," I thought to myself. Thanks to my previous experience on the NPM team, fortunately, I quickly acquired the inventory file of the network to get a clear picture of what equipment was already available on these sites.

I worked day and night and went over it with my supervisor over and over again until we were satisfied with the solution. I was thinking that I was done and it would be smooth sailing from there on, when my supervisor said

to me, "Djivinga, go and ensure our solution is aligned with the customer requirement." I thought to myself, "I have added everything needed to make this work. What more could they want?"

There was more, as it soon turned out. There was something in which the exercise had not given me experience, and that was alignment not only with the customer's technical scope but also with their budget. My configuration was within the budget. However, I prioritized modernizing the sites and getting them 5G-ready while the customer was more interested in increasing the alignment rate. This meant that we had to remove some of the modernized equipment and reallocate those funds to more radio units and antennas so as to impact more sites. In a nutshell, I had to get back to the drawing board.

I was feeling drained and irritated because this job seemed to be so repetitive. "I have to do this again?" I thought to myself. Not only that repetitiveness. There was also a conflict of some sort: Our internal strategy was to push for modernization while the customer's objective was to impact as many sites as possible within their budget. How do I strike a balance and help to achieve both objectives? I wondered.

After weeks of negotiating back and forth with the customer, my supervisor's patience was running thin. "Djivinga, we should have closed this by now," he said after one morning meeting, "Hurry up!" After seeing his anxious face, I knew that I had not done enough to meet the deadline. That week, with his help and guidance, I worked tirelessly every day with the customer. A couple of tough but fruitful meetings later, we worked out a win-win solution. I was relieved but most of all I was happy. I had an overwhelming feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment.

Consequently, I restored my supervisor's faith in me. The customer was impressed with how efficiently and effectively we had worked together that week. Finally, with the solution, we were able to reach an agreement. My supervisor approved the deal and the purchase order (PO) was issued.

In the middle of that year, a review of my performance objectives showed that I had delivered most of them; for this my supervisor awarded me with an excellent score. I was especially happy because I proved to myself and my supervisor that my probation result was not mere luck.

However, I knew that being able to successfully close one sale did not make me an expert.

With my colleagues at the award ceremony (author is 10th from right at 2nd row)

"It Takes a Village ..."

There is an African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." I would love to think of myself as the child and Huawei as the village because there is always so much for me to learn and so much for the village to teach me. The beauty of it is that Huawei is a global village, which makes learning that much more interesting.

In July of 2023 I was given the privilege to attend "The Onsite Specialized Class of Wireless Target Network & Digital Marketing Budget Guidance" in Shenzhen, China. It was the first time I had left my country and I was at once excited and anxious. I was alone and heading to a place where they spoke a different language but I was ready to embrace new experiences.

Notwithstanding its roughness, this trip turned out to be one of the highlights of my year, not only because it was my first trip to China but also because of the people I met and the knowledge I gained there. I met people with many years of experience who could well be my mentors; and I made new friends that I easily call for assistance in my daily work whenever necessary. My horizons were expanded, and I gained a global view of network evolution freeing myself from my previous limited view. I got to learn about challenges being faced in other countries, to which Huawei was tirelessly working to find solutions. I loved it there. But just like anything else, it came to an end just when it was getting good.

Memories of this training experience in China come back to me from time to time. There I learnt so much from my colleagues – or my fellow trainees, to be precise, who were all really good. There I just got to practice more of what I had learned. There I welcomed my new supervisor to challenge me to learn and become more proficient in my use of our digital marketing tool, the Three Cloud platform – the three clouds being the Experience Cloud, the Knowledge Cloud, and the Customer Solution Cloud. This is everything you need to fully convince a customer on their market position, network performance insight and the solutions we can provide to help them succeed. To say the least, it has been vital for my work.

I would call some of those colleagues and watch the training videos to improve my skills. Finally, in our job progress presentation for the multi-country office, I showcased my skill with a complete market and network insight report using the platform. The truth is, I am still

With colleagues from all over the world after a week of training in China (author is third from right at the second row)

MSSD Director (right) and the author (left) at the end of year ceremony where the author was honored with an Employee of the Year award

improving today, still calling to ask my colleagues for help, but that is how growth works because the new challenges facing me are not the same as the previous ones.

The Outcome

I lived through 2023 on "the extra mile", going the distance to show my value and trying to prove myself. However, the catch about going the extra mile is that it only begins when you are exhausted and when you feel like you cannot go any further. Going the extra mile requires dedication and perseverance, which is an important part of our core values according to my understanding. Most of all, you can never go the extra mile without having a good team to depend on and role models to look up to. I have seen colleagues in Huawei who go above and beyond every day and my goal is for them to see me in the same way and say the same thing about me.

This year started on a very emotional note for me, even though I am not an emotional guy. For some reasons I got even more motivated to keep growing. First, I was honored as one of Huawei's excellent individuals in Southern Africa Region, an honor that I was humbled to

receive. Coincidentally, the 2024 Local Talent Elite Class 8, a training program on the Customer Centric 3 (CC3) roles, namely Account Responsible (AR), Solution Responsible (SR) and Fulfillment Responsible (FR), was taking place; I was invited to participate in the program. This training painted a full picture for me of how our projects are operated on the frontline. It had brilliant people from all over Africa with the best energy, to say the least. I can truly say that they struck gold with the way this training was organized, through which I was motivated to keep learning and growing.

Words I Live By ....

My motto is, "Look in the mirror; you might see your biggest competitor." These words touch on mentality and attitude – a winning attitude and a positive mentality, to be specific. In order to continue growing, I must always reflect on what I can do and what I must learn. The goal is always to see a better version of myself professionally and personally, as inspired by our corporate core value: "growing by reflection."

Keep Trying, and Anything is Possible

By Victor Alejandro Alvarez / Guatemala

I started my career with an outsourcing company working for Huawei. That was in September 2011 and I was an outsourced engineer in charge of the delivery of value-added service (VAS) solutions. My supervisor came to recognize that I was capable of handling projects independently and had good social skills to build strong relationships with customers. So he asked me to work both as an engineer and project manager (PM) on the projects I was involved in at the time.

One year later, I became a Huawei employee. I really felt like part of a big family, with great colleagues, managers and customers. I was determined to learn and grow as much as I could and to prove my worthiness by delivering results to the highest possible standard.

Two years later, there was a virtual private network (VPN) project that we were implementing for customer T in Central America. The project had been handled by many

> ❝ *I was determined to learn and grow as much as I could and to prove my worthiness by delivering results to the highest possible standard.* ❞

colleagues before, but without tangible progress. Our relationship with the customer was not at a satisfactory level and their perception of us was far from ideal. One day I was asked by my supervisor if I wanted to take the challenge and to be the PM of that project. I agreed.

During my first week of working on that project, I had to travel to Panama, for a status meeting with the customer's information technology (IT) director, who was the owner of the project. That was my first important meeting involving management teams from both sides. By myself I prepared all the materials needed for the meeting and rehearsed my presentation a few times until I felt ready to meet the customer the next day.

Next morning we went to the customer's office for the meeting. I made my presentation and the result was a disaster. The customer's IT director was not satisfied with my presentation at all; he complained to me and our management team about our project delivery quality. His complaint dealt me a devastating blow – it was my first big meeting and the results were terrible. We were all disappointed and I left the meeting feeling like a failure.

That night, I made a promise to myself: That meeting would be my first and last terrible meeting as a PM. After collecting and analyzing the feedback from the customer

side, I planned to organize a one-week workshop, where both sides would sit together as one team and discuss an improvement plan to turn around the situation of the project. My supervisor agreed to the approach, and the workshop was arranged in a hotel with the help of our account team. The workshop was successfully done by involving key members from both sides. The results of the workshop were presented to the customer's IT director, who was very pleased with and agreed to our plan to move on.

After one year, we had achieved good results in several countries and I was able to build a relationship of trust with customer T. More importantly, their IT director became a friend of mine. That small success made me realize that I could achieve great things at Huawei.

After a few years of my working as PM in the software domain, our IT department started to grow. New and exciting solutions started to be offered to customers. Finally, a breakthrough project was achieved with customer C. The project, to be implemented in Guatemala, Central America, involved the migration of the entire Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution into our new IT infrastructure. And I was appointed the PM of that project. That assignment involved moving

Presenting in a workshop

from the software domain to the IT domain, learning new technologies, leading a new team of engineers, and building relationships with new customers, whom I had never met before. And I was ready to take up any challenges that would arise.

The project was extremely complicated. There were quite some new technologies involved and not many of us had any experience in them. After many months of hard work and by finding ways to reduce risks and solve issues, we managed to launch the project during a holiday week of 2016 in a maintenance window that opened up for three days. While most families in Guatemala were on holiday, our IT team spent those days staying in a hotel in front of the customer's office, switching places every 12 hours to ensure 24-hour execution of the maintenance window. The operation was planned to be completed by Sunday noon but our preparation allowed us to finish one day in advance.

After a few days, the results came in. The performance of the new ERP improved significantly. Processes that had typically taken 24 or 48 hours were now reduced to one or two hours. Customer satisfaction was very high, which allowed us to build new business opportunities that turned into project contract wins and

growth for us in the IT area and in our region. This project allowed me to get my first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) commendation. With the experience I had gained from being a PM, I became the first competency & qualification (C&Q) Level 4 PM in Central America.

I spent a few years taking charge of IT projects and one day I was told that a business support system (BSS) project for customer M needed a PM. The project had been at the delivery stage for two years, the incumbent PM was going to leave, and the relationship with the customer was unstable, since the project was under huge pressure to achieve hybrid subscriber migration as soon as possible. I was transferred to the BSS project as PM, and I accepted the new assignment.

On day one after joining the project team, I went to the customer's premises, where I introduced myself and met the project owner from the customer. She asked me about my experience as PM before. I told her that I had been working at Huawei since 2011 and had more than eight years of experience as PM.

"But you don't have any experience as a BSS PM, do you?" she cut to the chase, frowning with a trace of displeasure.

"No, but you can trust me on how to handle difficult

During a training program with my colleagues (author is fist from left at second row)

projects as a PM," I answered.

"Oh dear, you don't know what you're talking about. Let's wait for your results in six months and we'll see," she said with an expressionless face.

During the BSS project, we were able to complete the migration of hybrid subscribers, two major platform upgrades and prepared the environment for postpaid subscriber migration. The project owner was quite satisfied with our performance.

"Well done, dear," she shook hands with me, "you've surprised me and you're so professional!" And we have been good friends ever since.

After this BSS went stable enough following the completion of the project, I went on to support some other projects. One day, our Delivery Vice President (VP) asked me if I was interested in assuming the position of Project Director (PD) for the Honduras Office. This I accepted without hesitation.

I spent one year in Honduras, in charge of delivering all the projects in that country; meanwhile, I was involved in building and maintaining good relationships with the local carriers.

Looking back, to be honest, I find that my year in Honduras was the hardest of all the experiences I have had at Huawei. There were so many days when I struggled to overcome the challenges we were facing in the office. However, I also realize that the year I spent in Honduras was the period in which I learned the most. As a matter of fact, I was able to learn how projects were delivered in other areas, such as wireless, microwave, fiber to the home (FTTH), and data communications; and I got to improve myself and grow into a true Huawei PD. It was a year that saw me enjoy many happy hours with my Chinese colleagues, eating hotpot every weekend; it was a time when I even learned how to cook a hotpot, which became one of my favorite dishes.

Once you truly learn Huawei's corporate culture, you also learn how to appreciate it and how to live it; the culture is internalized and becomes part of you – a part that defines who you are. I still see many levels within the company that I could reach by learning and growing. I just hope that I can continue learning from my difficult times, overcome challenges facing me, and be worthy of the trust from my colleagues and supervisors. All in all, I want to aim higher and become better within the company.

Hopefully, in the future I will be given greater responsibilities to manage even greater projects by myself. Keep trying, I tell myself, and anything is possible!

Enjoying Chinese food with my colleagues in Honduras (author is sitting, third from right)

From Huawei ICT Academy to My Dream Job

By Wael Mofreh Ismail Elsharkawy / Egypt

It was in the vibrant city of Cairo, Egypt that my career in the information and communications technology (ICT) industry began, and I embarked on this exciting journey with a deep-seated passion. This is a story of how Huawei ICT Academy played a pivotal role in my transition from a student eager to learn artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and skills to a successful AI engineer with Huawei.

The Beginning

My higher educational path started at Zagazig University, where I pursued a Bachelor's degree in information technology. There, I laid the groundwork in databases, algorithms, and programming languages. After obtaining my Bachelor's degree I started to study for my Master's. At the time I came to realize that a significant gap existed between the job market and what I had learned. And it was during this time that I first encountered Huawei ICT Academy through a collaboration that the Academy had with the Ministry of Telecommunications in Egypt. This partnership provided a preparatory phase designed specifically for Master's students like me, which included an intensive three-month program aimed at enhancing our technical skills.

Intrigued by this opportunity, I joined Huawei ICT Academy and enrolled in the Huawei Certified ICT Associate (HCIA) AI course. This decision proved to be transformative for me. Although my knowledge of AI was initially limited, the course at Huawei ICT Academy provided a comprehensive introduction to AI technologies and machine learning techniques. The curriculum was thorough and hands-on, offering practical insights into the field and preparing me for both my Master's studies and future career.

Participating in "Seeds for the Future" Program

During my Master's studies, I had the incredible opportunity to participate, as one of 60 Egyptian students, in Huawei's "Seeds for the Future" program, a two-week initiative designed to foster innovation among young talents from around the globe. I was on a team of four and we aimed to develop our prototype, Savior Solution, which integrated radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags into school bags or bracelets to carry essential medical records linked to a mobile app for emergency access. Our primary challenge was working out a feasible solution that truly addressed the needs of children and their caregivers in case of an emergency. We faced numerous difficulties in refining our idea to ensure practicality and user-friendliness. The guidance from our mentors proved invaluable, providing insights that helped us navigate uncertainties and refine our approach. The collaborative brainstorming sessions fostered a sense of teamwork and encouraged us to seek support from experienced individuals.

The culmination of our efforts was a presentation of our prototype, where we showcased its potential to enhance child safety. The positive feedback from stakeholders was immensely gratifying, validating the hard work we had invested. I felt a strong sense of pride, knowing that our solution could impact the safety and well-being of children. This empowering experience helped to enhance my technical skills while it provided valuable lessons in effective management and teamwork through leadership training. Additionally, I gained insights into various aspects of Chinese culture, which broadened my perspective on global business and interpersonal relationships. Overall, participating in Huawei's "Seeds for the Future" program was a transformative experience, instilling in me a sense of purpose and appreciation for collaboration and innovation and motivating me to achieve my career aspirations.

As I continued to develop my skills, I also received recognition through the Huawei Certified Specialist Associate (HCSA) certification program. I successfully passed several HCSA certifications. Each certification represented a significant achievement for me and further validated my expertise in these critical areas. Whenever

Participating in my first program with Huawei ICT Talent Bank (ITB) on August 30, 2021 (author is second from right at back row)

I received such a credential, it was a proud moment and milestone in my career; it was also a testament to my commitment to continuous learning and professional growth.

Overcoming Challenge and Winning Prize at the Huawei ICT Competition Global Finals

Balancing my Master's degree studies with the intensive courses at Huawei ICT Academy was actually a significant challenge to me. The demands of my academic studies were exacting, and finding time to commit to the rigorous training provided by the Academy required careful time management and unwavering dedication. There were moments of exhaustion and self-doubt, but the desire to excel in both arenas kept me motivated. I would often study late into the night, striving to meet the requirements of both my university and the Academy.

I signed up for the ICT competition held by the Academy, and preparing for it presented another daunting challenge. The Academy provided two sessions per week on the competition campus, and juggling these commitments with my Master's studies was incredibly

During the Global ICT Competition winners' celebration ceremony (author is 2nd from right)

demanding. Each session required laser-sharp focus and preparation, often conflicting with my academic schedule. Yet, these challenges honed my time management skills and taught me the importance of resilience and perseverance. It was a period marked by hard work and sacrifice on my part, but the rewards were absolutely worth the efforts.

One of the most memorable milestones during my time at Huawei ICT Academy was participating in Huawei ICT Competition 2021–2022. This global competition brought together talented individuals from around the world to showcase their skills and innovations. With the knowledge and training I received from the Academy, I excelled in the competition and advanced to the finals. I was part of the Egyptian cloud team and we clinched an impressive Third Place globally. This award was not just a personal achievement but also a testament to the quality of training provided by our Egypt Huawei ICT Academy team, which allowed me to demonstrate my abilities on a global stage.

One day, I received an exciting call from Ms. Asmaa Serag, Manager of Egypt ICT Talent Bank (ITB) Program, who informed me about an initiative to establish a Huawei Certified ICT Professional (HCIP) Club – a special sort of HCIPs community – aimed at inspiring HCIA talent

to pursue further studies and make more contributions. Given my achievements with two HCIP certificates in AI and big data, I was invited to join this inaugural cohort of 20 distinguished individuals who would represent the community. I felt honored. And I was more than excited at the prospect of being part of the HCIP Club and interacting with passionate professionals and dedicated Huawei ITB team members; it also filled me with immense pride and motivation. In a recent event held by this Club, I had the pleasure of engaging with industry experts who offered invaluable insights; this further affirmed the significance of this Club and the impact of our collective efforts.

Career Advancement and Impact

The value of these certifications became evident as I entered the job market. My journey led me to Huawei Egypt, where I began my career as a software engineer with Global Network Operations Center (GNOC) Egypt Automation Intelligence (AUTIN) team. In this role, I worked on Operation Web Services (OWS), helping carriers build automated and intelligent operational capabilities. My responsibilities included integrating complex systems and developing solutions that improved operational efficiency.

The impact of Huawei ICT Academy on my career has been profound. The Academy provided me with advanced training, valuable certifications, and practical experience that were crucial for my success. The courses offered by the Academy were aligned with industry standards, ensuring that I gained relevant and up-to-date knowledge. The support from Huawei ICT Academy extended beyond the classroom, offering opportunities of participating in global competitions, networking with industry professionals, and accessing resources that helped me stand out in the job market.

Honored as a Top Hero

Recently I was honored as a Top Hero in recognition of my excellent work in the AI application domain. To be specific, I had been involved in a major project where I completed the proof of concept (POC) part in a timely manner and to the highest possible standard. The project not only showcased technical achievement on our part but also effectively demonstrated its value to the senior executives of our customer, which led to new project opportunities.

This honor also gave me credit for being able to come up with high-impact solutions and create business value through innovation. Looking back, I am incredibly proud of and thankful to my amazing team at Huawei for their collaboration and support, which played a crucial role in the success of this project. I count myself fortunate to have worked together with them over the years in pushing the boundaries of AI technologies and applications and setting the stage where we could navigate future challenges for more successes.

Finally, my journey from Huawei ICT Academy to my current position as an AI engineer is a testament to the Academy's effectiveness in preparing students for successful careers. The knowledge and skills I acquired from it have been directly applicable to my work, enabling me to contribute meaningfully to Huawei's projects and innovations. Additionally, it gave me the passion to continue to better myself. Recently, I passed the Huawei Certified ICT Expert (HCIE) Big Data written exam and will go on to become an expert. And I know that my journey will not stop here. In the future, I will remain eager to learn Huawei's latest technology and knowledge and strive to create more value and make further contributions in my role. Ⓛ

Among the first members of the HCIP Club (author is third from left)

Believing in the Power of Belief

Highlights from the Huawei Saudia Arabia Hero Storytelling & Long Service Awards Ceremony

By Hu Yong / Saudi Arabia

On October 2, the 2024 Huawei Saudi Arabia Hero Storytelling Event & Long Service Awards Ceremony was successfully held at the Dabab Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. With more than 540 onsite and online attendees, the event saw 17 of our colleagues at Huawei Saudi Arabia honored with the Hero award. Of these heroes, who came from various departments, 10 were invited to the stage to share their stories. It was an event not only for celebrating the inspiring stories of heroism but also for honoring the exceptional individuals whose contributions had been pivotal to company success. While recognizing these heroes, the event was also aimed to inspire and motivate all of us at Huawei Saudia Arabia to strive for even greater achievements in the future.

This was the fourth edition of the Hero Storytelling Event held by Huawei Saudi Arabia Representative Office and, once again, it brought together new faces from across

The Hero Award recipients

Huawei Saudi Arabia Hero and Long Service Award trophies

various departments. Each year, the stories of our heroes continue to emerge from different challenges, showcasing their resilience and the unique blend of hard work and inspiration that define their journeys.

This year's event started with Eric Yang, CEO of Huawei Saudi Arabia, giving the opening speech. As he emphasized, in every new business venture, the more achievements we made, the bigger the gaps we would identify, and that was why we needed heroes to step forward and share their stories of how they made the impossible possible. Those stories, he said, would motivate us to work for even greater achievements and accomplishments.

Some of our colleagues have served the company for more than 10 years – a period of time long enough for a sapling to grow into a towering tree and for water to make a hole out of a rock by wearing away at it. With unwavering commitment and passion as well as relentless determination, these veterans have pursued their dreams. They have stayed true to their belief in the company's core values, which they have practiced consistently; they have been the driving force behind the growth and success of our representative office and our customers.

For this reason, the Long Service Award was created by Huawei Saudi Arabia and intended to honor the

The Hero roll-up banners

employees with over ten years' service. Currently, over 100 local employees have been working with Huawei Saudi Arabia for more than 10 years, with five of them having served for more than 20 years. As part of this year's celebration, three representatives of those people were invited to the stage to share their inspiring stories.

Zhuge Jinhao, an account manager, was one of those award-winning veterans. He shared a touching story about his dedication to customer service. Vividly he told of how he managed to build a solid relationship with a customer and finally achieved win-win business results.

Mohammed Rehan, a representative who had been working at Huawei Saudi Arabia for over 20 years, shared his story of how he joined Huawei as a young man and had since served the company for a long, long time. To make his story more gripping, he told us that he had encountered many work challenges such as meeting tight delivery schedules, financial key performance indicator (KPI) pressure, ensuring customer satisfaction, and forming effective teams. At the end of his story, he emotionally said that he had come to realize that Huawei had become like a family to him, and that he could not imagine separating himself from this family.

Indeed, their stories were a testament to the courage and determination that the individuals like them had demonstrated in the face of adversity. The stories were about how they had persevered for over 10 years and how dedicated they had been to ensuring customer satisfaction and company success.

What impressed everyone was not only the stories told by the heroes and the glittering trophies, but also the Avenue of Heroes. After the event, the heroes each took their own Hero roll-up banner back home. Abdulmajeed, an account manager, said that he would bring this honor back and put it in a prominent place at home. He would remember the sensation and thrill that this moment brought to him and use it as motivation to continue moving forward in the future.

These inspiring stories told by our heroes left the audience motivated and empowered; this also helped to foster a strong sense of purpose and accountability. At the same time, the event definitely boosted the morale at Huawei Saudi Arabia and made each of its departments more ambitious.

Looking ahead, there is no doubt that we will keep going and growing, because we believe in the power of belief. As long as we try everything, no one can stop us.
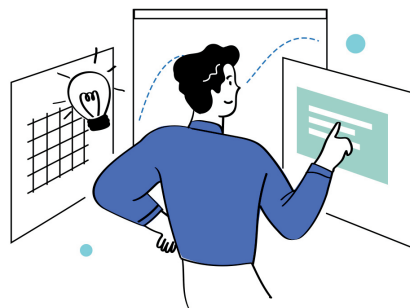
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Group photo of the event

There Are No Small Customers

By Elio Liendo Rey / Costa Rica

I started my career at Huawei in 2012 in the solutions department, and then moved on to the role of Solution Responsible (SR). Through the years in this role, I have had the opportunity to work on many projects of various dimensions together with excellent work teams from both the internal and customer sides. Of this satisfying experience, the best part for me has been helping to ensure the sustained growth of Huawei's business as well as that of our customers, and seeing those customers beginning to recognize Huawei as a valued partner rather than just a supplier of equipment and services.

In 2017, I moved to Costa Rica and have since worked there in the integrated accounts department of Huawei Costa Rica, in a role responsible for several service providers that are the local subsidiaries of regional and global operators. When I arrived in Costa Rica, as I recall, I had several challenges to solve quickly.

First, I had to quickly familiarize myself with the local culture and know the people, while at the same time acclimating myself to the business environment that is typical of the telecommunications industry.

Second, although it is true that the technologies for delivering fixed and mobile services are universal and there are several similarities in network implementations, it is also true that each market has its particularities that must be deeply understood in order to make value propositions to our customers. In my case, I had to well understand the local Costa Rican telecom market before I could help our customers in any meaningful way.

During the Global Solution Elite Team Training in China in 2015 (author is the one in a white shirt on the left)

> *However, we can also find some customer representatives who go for innovation and who are willing to voice their opinions to the regional management*

Get to Know Your Customers for a Start, and Then Seek to Gain Their Trust

In the beginning, I found a scenario where apparently the customers – the local subsidiaries of global or regional telecom operators – had little power to decide on what solutions to be deployed or which providers to use, since they had to follow the mandates and standards of the regional offices.

At first sight, it seemed that it was difficult to increase the size of the local market with new solutions that were better adapted to the local requirements. However, through the knowledge I gained of our customers and their business during that period, I was able to start identifying the local needs that had not been met through the regional strategies defined by their parent organizations.

This task required great dedication and patience. Perhaps the biggest challenge I faced was establishing a professional relationship with the various customers by working on each of the accounts under my responsibility in a short time, and then turning it into a more personal one. As creating bonds of true trust is essential to getting people to share their needs and pain points, I believed that we should begin by identifying their needs and then work out new integrated solutions that would allow us to meet these needs in the most effective way possible. That would be, I thought, where there lay the differentiation between being a simple provider of equipment or services and a true strategic partner.

No Customer Is Too Small

Generally, we focus on those people within our customer's organization who have some true decision-making power and hold managerial positions.

In the case of operations that are subsidiaries of regional operators, and especially in cases where regional leaders are in another country, this perception that local customers are of little relevance is all the more marked. Within a customer's organization, we can find some representatives who prefer to follow regional guidelines on applicable solutions rather than suggest alternatives that could be more efficient and effective in solving problems that are specific to the local scenario.

However, we can also find some customer representatives who go for innovation and who are willing to voice their opinions to the regional management, backed by detailed analyses of the particularities of the local scenario.

With my colleagues at Huawei's training center in Shenzhen, China (author is in front crouching)

In my own experiences, I was able to find in many cases that people from the customer side could have influence or very good communication with their supervisors, both local and regional, who valued their opinions when making decisions. Learning from such experiences, I have always taken the time to get to know as many people from the customer side as possible, and gone to great lengths to understand their concerns and needs.

With this approach, over the years I have been able to promote new solutions for our customer's local networks. Many of these projects started with a very small scope or to solve specific needs, as pilots that allowed customers to assess the offered benefits and promote them internally. Showing satisfactory results, these projects have become massive deployments that have allowed Huawei's business to grow sustainably in the country year after year.

Always Listen Carefully to Your Customer to Uncover Hidden Opportunities

In one of our local accounts where Huawei had a big presence in the Radio Access Network (RAN) part, the network operation manager and his team faced major

problems with the current Network Operation Center (NOC) service provider, which had not met many of the contract's requirements. However, it was the regional organization of this local account or customer that had chosen this provider that was also offering service for other operations, so the customer did not have much autonomy or many ways to press for improvements that could much better met their local requirements. As the contract expiration was approaching, a new bidding had to be launched to select the provider for the next three years. One day an operations and maintenance (O&M) manager informed me of this situation, and I told him that we could offer a solution for this service. I then involved our regional experts and scheduled several sessions with the customer to present our NOC solution.

One of the greatest advantages we showed our customer was the possibility of establishing synergies between the NOC service and customer support and back-office services that we were already offering for their network. Partnering with the customer we developed an integrated solution that took into account all the scenarios and all the services. Through this customer-centric approach, we found ourselves in a favorable position in the bidding; we ended up being awarded the service contract and becoming the customer's new NOC service provider.

Thinking back on this, I find that what has been most

satisfying for us over these years of serving as a service provider for the customer is that we have maintained a high level of customer satisfaction. Recently, the customer's O&M manager requested to their regional organization an extension of our service after the expiration of the original contract.

The Path of Transformation from Provider to Partner

Something that is well known but often forgotten is that trust is not easy to earn and can be very easy to lose. The most important basis of any relationship is mutual respect and trust, and this is especially true in the relationships we establish with our customers. It is necessary for us to put ourselves in their shoes and find effective ways to solve the problems before they can cause them any inconveniences, troubles, or even damages, thus maintaining the hard-earned trust between both sides.

We have to be aware that problems and unforeseen situations will always exist in our projects, but it is the attitude and professionalism with which we dedicate ourselves to solving them that our customers will value the most. With such a positive attitude and through such professionalism, I have created value for our customers; with great efforts I have played my part in helping both the company and our customers to achieve steady business growth.

A reflection of mine I want to share here as a closing remark is what I thought and felt as a result of what happened during the difficult years of the pandemic. During the first few months, we faced a lot of uncertainty, just as our customers did. But instead of stepping aside, we chose to identify the areas of improvement in our customers' networks, which had obviously not been prepared to handle the huge volumes of network traffic that surged due to the lockdowns. We would go out of our way to identify where network improvements should and could be made; we would propose network expansion and upgrade projects. Such proposals, received very readily by the customers, translated into significant business opportunities for our local office and business growth for our customers. These success stories have been replicated in many other offices in our region and, I am sure, reinforced the idea that many of our colleagues embrace Huawei's core values as a comprehensive guide in their work.

During an event in Costa Rica in 2023 (author is third from left)

Bridging Cultures and Enhancing Expertise: My Memorable Business Trips

By Lee Yen Ning / Malaysia

Hungary: My First Overseas Business Trip

In November 2022, I became a member of Huawei Global Service Resource Center (GSRC) Malaysia as a Customer Experience Management (CEM) engineer. Shortly after joining, I was assigned my first business trip to Hungary. This trip marked the real start of my career as an engineer with Huawei; it was not only my first business trip but also the first time I had ever traveled overseas alone, so I did feel excited and anxious at the same time.

While I was preparing for the trip, as I recall, I planned every detail to ensure a smooth journey. Upon arriving in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, after a long flight, I was delighted to see the beautiful architecture and experience the rich culture the city had to offer. Now I was rather excited than anxious, and began to navigate my new surroundings. I was amazed at the historical landmarks and modern infrastructure of Budapest, wondering how they could blend so perfectly. That made me very much look forward to living and working in the city for a while, for my stay there would last several months.

While I was there in Budapest, I had the opportunity to work closely with the Hungary Huawei team. This involved a series of meetings, workshops, and collaborative projects aimed at enhancing customer experience as part of our business strategy. I was impressed by the team's expertise and willingness to share insights, which were crucial in helping me understand the local market dynamics and customer expectations and in achieving project deliverables.

I faced a steep learning curve during this assignment, since I lacked a background related to telecommunications. I had to quickly familiarize myself

Having countdown party with my colleagues (author is third from right)

with the technical terms of the industry as well as the specific practices and technologies used by Huawei. I turned to my colleagues for support and help, which they readily provided; their generosity was of great help to me in overcoming these challenges. While I was trying to speed up my understanding of the logic and features of the platform we were working with, I would spend extra hours studying related documents and other materials. Much to my delight, I found that this hands-on experience was incredibly effective in bridging the gap between my previous knowledge and my new responsibilities.

In addition to achieving professional growth, I also had the chance to immerse myself in the local culture. From enjoying traditional Hungarian cuisine to exploring the historic streets of Budapest, every moment was a learning experience. Additionally, I was able to travel to other European countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), Austria, and the Czech Republic. Visiting these countries expanded my cultural understanding and provided a richer context for my work and life.

A Quick Escape to Hallstatt, Austria: Exploring a New Destination

One particularly memorable getaway was a short trip to Hallstatt, Austria. As I arrived at this picturesque village, nestled between the serene lake and towering

alpine mountains, I was immediately struck by its breathtaking beauty. The first view of Hallstatt, with its quaint houses reflected in the crystal-clear water, made me feel as if I were stepping into a wonderland in a fairy tale. This serene and stunning environment offered a perfect contrast to the bustling cities, and it provided a moment of tranquility for reflective meditation. The charming streets, friendly locals, and rich history of Hallstatt made it an unforgettable experience that added a unique dimension to my travels in Europe.

However, since we visited Hallstatt on the weekend, many of the restaurants and grocery shops were closed. After a long search, we were lucky to find one open restaurant that turned out to be a delightful place with delicious local cuisine. This experience added an adventurous twist to our visit, making it even more memorable.

South Africa: A Continued Journey of Growth

Following the success of my trip to Hungary, I was later assigned another business trip to South Africa. This trip was another step forward in my professional development providing me with new experiences and challenges.

Arriving in Johannesburg, South Africa, I received

With my local colleagues (author is second from left)

a warm welcome from our local driver who made me feel at home right away. However, the trip to South Africa also presented some of the biggest challenges I had faced in my career. I was tasked with handling a project as the only platform engineer. Actually, I had to work on numerous tasks simultaneously, from feature introduction to troubleshooting and customer inquiry handling. The workload was intense, and managing it all single-handedly required a high level of organization and problem-solving skills. Despite the pressure, I managed to solve the inquiries from customers and ensure the project's success. This experience tested my resilience and adaptability, reinforcing the importance of staying calm and focused under pressure. Overcoming these challenges and seeing the project through to completion, it was an immensely rewarding experience.

In addition to addressing the professional challenges, I also had the opportunity to explore South Africa's rich cultural heritage. Visiting Cape Town, I was mesmerized by its natural beauty, vibrancy, and culturally significant history. I visited iconic landmarks such as Table Mountain and Cape Point, which provided me with a deeper understanding of the country's history and its journey towards reconciliation and growth. This cultural experience was enriching for me, and it broadened my perspective on global diversity and inclusion.

Overall, my business trips to Europe and South Africa have been instrumental in shaping my career at Huawei GSRC. They have provided me with a wealth of knowledge, enhanced my professional skills and broadened my cultural horizons. These experiences have not only made me a better engineer but also a more empathetic and effective team player. Moreover, these trips have highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability in the global market. Each country, with its unique culture and business environment, has taught me valuable lessons about customer expectations and market dynamics. As I continue my journey with Huawei, I am excited to apply the knowledge and skills I have acquired to new challenges and opportunities. The skills and insights I have gained from these experiences will undoubtedly continue to influence my approach to work and collaboration in the years to come.

In conclusion, I am grateful for those business trips I have taken. They have been a transformative experience for me, both professionally and personally; they have broadened my horizons, deepened my understanding of global markets and enhanced my ability to navigate diverse cultural landscapes. Looking ahead, I will continue to learn and grow with Huawei GSRC so as to contribute more to Huawei's global success.

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Go to our website and read *A Man, a Cook, and a Dog*, and write us your unique work stories. We want to highlight the contributions of ordinary people who do extraordinary things, because good examples are like a beacon in the dark, they lead and inspire us.

world may feel quite connected.

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Read *Stars Along the Mountaintops* and share your own touching team/project stories. We believe the best team and project stories reflect our company's purpose and core values, on which the

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What Do I Do in Office? is a story about how a daddy explains his work in Huawei to his 5-year-old son. Share with us your own touching, inspiring or life-changing experiences during your career at Huawei. Your readers around the

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Opinions

Read *Why Protecting IPR Should Matter to Us All* and share your opinions on issues and policies at Huawei. The best submissions offer fresh insight, critique ideas, actions, and policies – not people, suggest

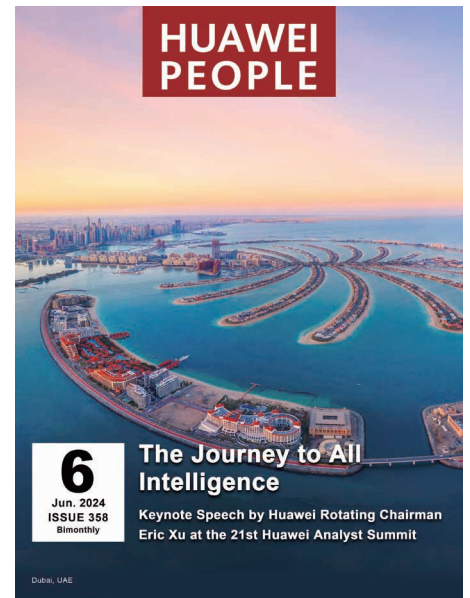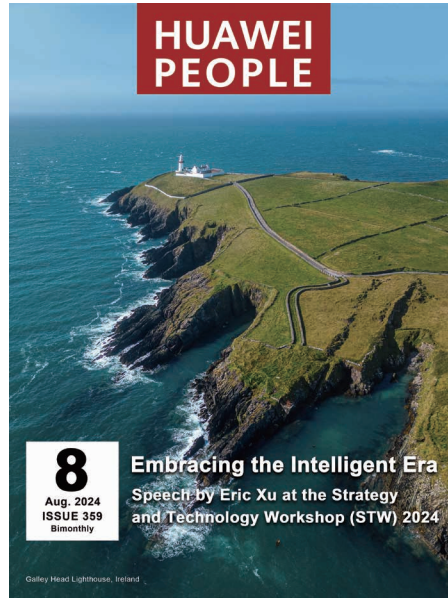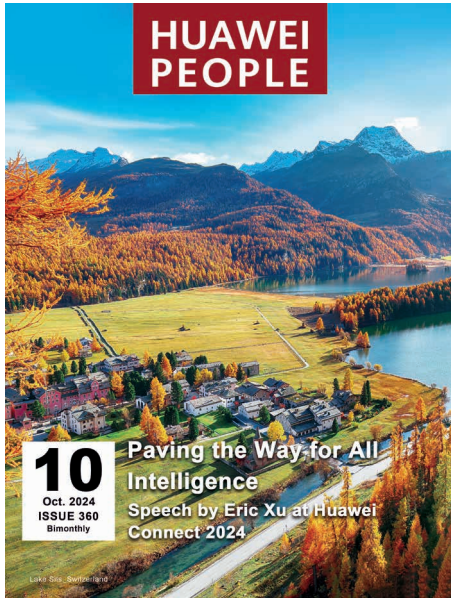solutions, and align with the core values of Huawei.

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